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THE KEY
OF
THE GRAVE

BY

W. ROBERTSON NICOLL

If we believe that Jesus died and rose . . .

EIGHTH EDITION

HODDER AND STOUGHTON
LONDON NEW YORK TORONTO

TO

M. H. HODDER

AND

T. W. STOUGHTON

MY FRIENDS AND

PUBLISHERS

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C'est un des grands principes du Christianisme, que tout ce qui est arrivé à Jesus Christ doit se passer dans l'âme et dans le corps de chaque Chrétien.

PASCAL.

PREFATORY NOTE

THESE words are meant only for those who are bearing the burden of a great sorrow. The papers would never have been put together had it not been for an incident which showed that there are not many books written directly for those who are discovering, by actual experience, what bereavement and death really are. The only comfort is to be found in fuller understanding of the content and meaning of the familiar words of Scripture; and if these meditations help in the humblest way to deepen in any heart the sense of the majesty and the beauty and the power of divine revelation, the writer's purpose will

be abundantly answered. I have endeavoured to mark quotations carefully, but am conscious throughout of special obligation to the writings of Père Gratry, Henri Perreyve, Madame Swetchine, and George Steward, also to *Le Récit d'une Sœur.*

HAMPSTEAD.

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I

LIFE A PATIENT WAITING: DEATH A FALLING ASLEEP

Howbeit all is not lost.
The warm noon ends in frost,
And worldly tongues of promise,
Like sheep bells die off from us
On the desert hills cloud-cross'd:
Yet through the silence shall
Pierce the death-angel's call,
And 'Come up hither,' recover all.

E. B. BROWNING.

LIFE A PATIENT WAITING: DEATH A FALLING ASLEEP.

In laying down the substance of his teaching, the Apostle Paul refers to a vision of the risen Jesus unchronicled otherwise. 'He was seen of about five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep.' There is, as Principal Edwards remarks, a pathetic force in the word 'remain.' It means more than simple existence—to remain was patiently to wait. The vision of the risen Jesus, as Dr. Maclaren recently pointed out, had for about five hundred brethren turned life into a patient waiting and death into a falling asleep. For all

who receive it, the faith of Easter does the same.

In a certain sense, St. Paul was the last on earth, and will be the last, to see the risen Lord as those brethren saw Him. They looked on Him with the eyes of sense as well as the eyes of faith. When they beheld and believed, they must have been for the most part young men, else the greater part would not have been remaining after twenty-five years. They were living to attest their vision by experience and by hope; and the witnesses gone were as good. For they fell asleep. Though their expectation was not fulfilled, they died in the calm of faith. The Apostle remembers them, and the holy end of their conversation, and knows that the Lord is risen indeed. For us the vision is only with the eyes of faith, but it is just as

sure. Every believer sees the face of Christ. For many that face looks in like a mother's on their heedless infancy; it is in their first dreams; they know it from the beginning. For others it shines out after long and lonely years of yearning and gloom. Others, like St. Paul, are rebuked by it in the height of madness and revolt. The disclosure, when it comes and takes possession of a strong nature just past youth, and fully subjugates it, is a very wonderful thing. But, come when it may or how it may, it transforms not only the aspect and the name, but the very nature of Life and Death.

How shall we sum up life? 'Youth,' said one, 'is a blunder; manhood a struggle; old age a regret.' Is not all youth a waiting? The fresh young faces of the children are bent patiently over their task-work; their

parents, conscious, perhaps, of their own failure, watch them with boundless expectation. Many have begun; they have set their feet on the crowded first rungs of the ladder, and are looking up wistfully to the higher places. They vow that they will never be careless, never weary till they stand there. And how many are silently waiting for the crown of satisfied affection! They are companionless and lonely for the moment, but they fare on hopefully in quest of the unknown friends in the distance who have started to meet them. Once these are found, everything will be altered; life will rejoice and blossom as the rose.

But a day comes when we say to ourselves that we need wait no longer. After the waiting has grown weary, we begin to see that it is fruitless. Others had

seen it long before. That day—we shall never mark it in any calendar, we shall never write its history in any journal; but we never marked or wrote of any day so fateful. That day when we admit what we had long secretly suspected, when we say it right out—I have nothing to wait for. The day when the professional man says, My position will never be higher; I must remain here till I die; the dream of triumph and success is over. The day when the solitary confesses that life must be to the end unshared. When we say to ourselves at last, with that strange sinking at the heart, that the blessings of happier brothers and sisters are never to be ours that congenial, rewarded, prosperous work, satisfying love and fellowship are finally denied us—we have come to the great testing hour of life. For 'success is counted

sweetest by those who ne'er succeed.' Yet even then we may overcome in the thought of our Saviour. The narrow life may be Christ-warmed. He Whose own life was so limited, so thwarted, will be with us in it, and so

> 'Narrow ways are good to walk in
> When there's moss beneath the footsteps,
> Honeysuckle overhead.'

But He turns us to the hope of His coming. We have waited for what has passed us; let us wait now for what is sure. *Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.* Life can no more be weary, grey, and listless when on the border of every day lies this unimaginable glory. 'Let us do our quiet work as if we were preparing for kings, and watch attentively at the door, for the next comer may be the Lord Himself.'

The departed brethren had, it was well

remembered, fallen asleep. They went to rest, sure that they would waken again in the Face of Jesus Christ. They had never forgotten that Face. They had thought to see it next in the clouds of Heaven—to hear without dying the voice of the Archangel and the trump of God. But when their summons came they obeyed it in faith. To some death comes like a fulfilment—to others like the sudden snap of a tiger's tooth. Some die by long-drawn agonies; others easily and sweetly. But death is a falling asleep for all who have seen the risen Lord. They awake in the light of His countenance to find the pain gone, the clouds scattered, the burdens lifted for ever.

There is in St. Paul's words the promise of reunion. That he was probably not thinking of the state of the soul when he

wrote the words, that he assuredly did not think of the departed as unconscious or quiescent—is evident from the whole tenor of the chapter. He is thinking of the body —of the flesh that was joined to the Eternal Word. Christ has risen, and His rising means the unassailable sanctity of the perfect man. In despite of corruption, dishonour, the extremity and wreck of death, we feel that the sacred places of earth are its graves. 'I see nobody,' wrote Carlyle on one of his visits to Scotland, 'I do not even read much. The old hills and rivers, the old earth with her star firmaments and burial vaults, carry on a mysterious, unfathomable dialogue with me. It is eight years since I have seen a spring, and in such a mood I never saw one. It seems all new and original to me—beautiful, almost solemn. Whose great laboratory is that? The hills stand snow-powdered,

pale, bright. The black hailstorm awakes in them, rushes down like a swift ocean tide, valley answering valley; and again the sun blinks out, and the poor sower is casting his grain into the furrow, hopeful that the Zodiacs and far Heavenly Horologes have not faltered; that there will be yet another summer added for us and another harvest. Our whole heart asks with Napoleon, "Messieurs, who made all that?"' He Who made it has redeemed it. He will restore His lost creation, recover the bones which He has broken, gather the sleeping dust and transfigure it with the splendours of a new life in the great reunion for which we wait.

'Only at times does the awful mist
Lift off, and we seem to see
For a moment's space the far dwelling-place
Of these our beloved and Thee.

Only at times through the soul's shut doors
Come visits divine as brief,
And we cease to grieve, crying "Lord, I believe,
Help Thou mine unbelief."

Linger a little, invisible host
Of the sacred dead, who stand
Perhaps not far off, though men may scoff,
Touch me with unfelt hand!'

II

AT THE EVERGREEN THORN-BUSH IN THE WILDERNESS

Je pleure mon Albert gaiement.

ALEXANDRINE DE LA FERRONAYS.

One chief use of this life is to form friendships for the next.

J. RENDEL HARRIS.

AT THE EVERGREEN THORN-BUSH IN THE WILDERNESS.

WHAT are we to do when it is dull and cold and weary weather with us, when our hearts hunger after vanished faces night and day, when our lives seem to be broken at the centre, and behind and before we see nothing but failure and defeat? Said Keble: 'When you find yourselves overpowered as it were by melancholy, the best way is to go out and do something kind to somebody.' Let us do what we can, says another counsellor, go on with the work that can be done as well in the dark days as in the bright, the work which otherwise will have to be hurried through in the sunshine. But the sure

remedy is the serious and resolute consideration of the Love of Christ's Atonement and the Power of His Resurrection In the hardest, dullest, gloomiest mood of the soul we may hear the voice of God, as Moses heard it at the evergreen thorn-bush in the wilderness; and hearing, our souls shall live. 'That the dead are raised Moses showed at the evergreen thorn-bush when he called the Lord the God of Abraham.' Abraham had died long before, but the voice from the bush bore witness that he still lived to God. After the brief sharp agony of the Cross came the Resurrection, which testified that to Christ was given power over all flesh, and that as Jesus rose and revived, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him. These thoughts give us hope and enduring strength in the most solitary place.

The sense of desolation deepens steadily

as we think of the shelters and stays we have lost. Year by year the Church of Christ is sorely weakened. It seems sometimes as if Providence was striking at every sweet and saintly head. The peace-makers obtain peace, and the strife goes on. The fortunes of the Church are sometimes obscured. Its leaders are seized with a strange faintness when they should be thrusting in the sickle to reap because the harvest has come. Battles we thought ended, have to be wearily resumed. It is good to be concerned for the cause of truth, to grieve over the defection, the disloyalty, the paralysis of the moment. The care of the Church was the last burden St. Paul delivered to God. But the resting-place in the wilderness is the thought that the Shepherd gave His life for the sheep; that He was exalted on high to continue His shepherdly care; and that the delay, the

hiding, and the outward roughness are but the concealment of love.

These losses would be better borne if we did not feel the steady impoverishment of our own lives. In youth it seems as if everything were possible; all is ours, or within our reach. But life is an apprenticeship to continued resignation, and as one hope dies after another, as the music ceases and the colour of the painting fades, we realise our loneliness and nothingness; even if purpose and desire are unaltered, we are all too weak for the fight. The misery of life is that the first heaven and the first earth pass away, and are not replaced. But the Resurrection tells us that God takes away the first that He may establish the second; and to those who receive it, the very hour when they discover that the earthly ambition has failed, that the prizes pursued so long

are hopelessly out of reach, may reveal that, through the power of His Resurrection, Christ has made them more than conquerors over life. The vast majority of those in maturer years, when they look at what they are and at what they hoped to be, must acknowledge defeat. Even if the coveted thing has been won, it has not yielded the expected happiness. But all is transfigured when we discern that the very mortification, obscurity, dreariness, disappointment, over which we sighed, have fed the springs of immortality, and that the hour of our deepest humiliation has set free the treasure that is hid with Christ in God. Then the earthly sorrow vanishes, and all life grows warm in the sunshine of believing love.

So in the 'sessions of sweet silent thought' by the evergreen thorn-bush in the wilderness our dead return. All are ours in a deeper

manner, for they and we are Christ's, and Christ is God's. The Lord, the God of Abraham, shows us that we all live to Him. He does not replace the old loves and companionships by the society of the angels: He does not even think the fellowship of Christ enough. Have we sought to understand that God means to go back on the past—that as from Him all things come, so to Him they return in circular flow? Have we ever thought of all that is implied in the resurrection of the dead? Reduce that doctrine to its lowest terms, and still it is full of unexpressed suggestions. What does God mean when He says that He is to repair the old waste places, that in a Day to be, deserts shall blossom and wildernesses be glad? The dust of Christ is not here: He is risen. But the dust of the brethren with whom He shared flesh and blood remains—scattered

by the four winds over the redeemed world. It is enough to know that only the visible and temporal order, with what pertains to it, is passing; that everything which belongs to the invisible and Divine order continues, and that the breaking and failing of the one are meant to reveal in all its beauty and love the Eternal Purpose of God in Jesus Christ our Lord.

III

IF IT WERE NOT SO

Sometimes when I sit musing all alone
The sick diversity of mortal things,
Into my soul, I know not how, there springs
The vision of a world unlike our own.
O stable Zion, perfect endless One,
Why hauntest thou a soul that hath no wings?
I look on Thee as men on mirage springs,
Knowing the desert bears but sand and stone.
Yet as a passing mirror in the street
Flashes a glimpse of gardens out of range,
Through some poor window open to the heat,
So in our world of doubt and death and change
The vision of Eternity is sweet,
The vision of Eternity is strange.

MADAME DARMESTETER.

IF IT WERE NOT SO.

'MAN that is born of a woman is of few days and full of trouble.' This is emphatically the preacher's text; it is one which he might repeat to himself every time he entered the pulpit. If he did, we should hear little of the prevailing complaint that the preaching of our time is so largely mundane. It draws its motives and consolations, we are told, mainly from this life; and while by no means denying the other, fails to give it due place and weight. If this is true, the builders are once more rejecting a headstone of the corner.

It is not the manner of the Scriptures to

make much of this life, save in its supremely momentous connection with the other. And is not this the wisdom of God? We hear much as to what may be done in this life—of the possibilities of victory, attainment, and achievement in the years that lie before us. There may be something in this to attract the young and the sanguine. Not that the young are always sanguine; we doubt whether in these heavy-laden days the best among the young are hopeful; and we are sure many can look back and say that even in a hard life they were never so utterly despondent as sometimes in youth. But take the older. We may leave out, for the sake of argument, those who have attained great positions, though the happiest are not the crowned. Here are those who have ambitions, and waken up to the consciousness that they have missed them. William Cald-

well Roscoe notes with sadness the

> 'Low rustling of the loved Apollian leaves,
> With which my youthful hair was to be crowned,
> Grow dimmer in my ears.'

And Christina Rossetti, in her infinitely pathetic poem, sings of

> 'The dark hair changing to grey,
> That hath won neither laurel nor bay.'

How many hardworking, anxious business men are thankful if they keep the roof over their heads, and make some humble provision for those dear to them. How little ambition means to the immense multitude of the struggling and honest poor. For them any possible rise is insignificant, while a fall may be ruin. And how many there are for whom the storm of life is past, and who are simply waiting. The years of struggle lie behind—the time when the husband died—the worse pain when the son went wrong—all lie in the softened light of the future. Any gospel of

this life is useless for all these. The peace-bringing truth for them is that no man really fails who gives his heart to the chief concern and makes choice of the good part, which is so good because it shall never be taken away from us.

And, while we should be the last to say a word against the preaching of a higher life, is it reached by mere earthly effort, by perpetual struggle, and alternation of victory and defeat? When we do our best, the ideal is still beyond us to chill and dishearten. Yet not beyond us, if we look to the other life, to our breaking through this thraldom of the flesh, and the coming to pass of the strange great words, *We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.*

Consolations drawn from this life do not touch what is deepest in sorrow. Time can heal much, but there are troubles beyond its

skill. For these we must call in eternity. There are empty places which must be empty till the angel faces 'smile with the morn.' There are agonies in the presence of which we can only say that all sorrow is short-lived enough. It is but a little while. Those on whom life and death have wreaked their worst are not defeated if they can look beyond to their 'triumph o'er grey time.'

Nor is it possible to repel all the onsets of temptation by forces drawn from this world. 'Man is naturally religious,' says Roux; 'he is only supernaturally virtuous.' Penalties exacted even here are no doubt often terrible enough. But their incidence is too irregular to make them really deterrent. Utilitarianism cannot justify itself on this scene—if there is nothing beyond. The thought of eternity must come in. To sin is to ally one's-self with those who are 'unrighteous

still.' The course of sin is downward, and ever downward. To resist temptation is to choose a portion with the pure, who, as in our inmost hearts we know, must in the end triumph openly. All that is sacred in memory and in affection draws us from pollution to their side. How many has the thought saved: 'If I am to spend eternity with her, I must spend it in the presence of Jesus Christ.'

Yes; the further pier of the bridge that spans life rests on the unseen shore This life is much as the time for discipline for preparation, for hearing and obeying the Spirit and the Bride. But it is little as the time for happiness, for success, even for achievement. It is the porch dismantled and wind-blown, yet not uncheerful if there falls on it the steady sunshine of the other world. Only thus shall we touch and lift the life of the millions who say with the

factory-girl quoted by Dr. Newman: 'I think if this should be the end of all; and if all I have been born for is just to work my heart and life away in this dull place, with those mill-stones in my ears for ever, until I could scream out for them to stop and let me have a little quiet: with my mother gone, and I never able to tell her again how I loved her, and of all my troubles,—I think, if this life is the end and there is no God to wipe away all tears from all eyes, I could go mad.'

IV

THAT WE MUST BELIEVE OR DIE

I still wept, but my tears were turned to tears of joy, and, forgetting the irritable murmur which even now burst from me, there rose up an involuntary hymn of thanksgiving. Calm strength returned. I felt myself girded anew to the strife; I felt that my will had been steeped sevenfold in the Blood of the Lamb.

HENRI PERREYVE.

Thy will be done, though in my own undoing.

SIR THOMAS BROWNE.

THAT WE MUST BELIEVE OR DIE.

THE alternative is stated by our Lord, *If ye believe not that I am He, ye shall die in your sins.* It is a settled fact of life; not true merely for an anguished moment. Unless we believe in Him as the Brother and Uplifter of our race; unless we trust Him to separate between us and our sins, we shall die with those sins around us, upon us, within us, atmosphere, load, and poison. The Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins —how completely we shall understand as we comprehend with all saints the length and the breadth, and the depth and the height, and know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge. He has released our forfeit, if

we believe: if we do not, there remains the far and awful result which grows more terrible in the light of such a fact as Heredity —which might well be the religion of the future if Christianity were not.

The same alternative is true in other applications. We must believe or die. Die not by a stroke separating material and spiritual, but by the slow dwindling of moral potency, of aspiration and ardour. If we believe not, we must at best seek our refreshments and find our hopes in the earth-world. We may not grow at once degraded, but those who lose least lose all. Some will say frankly, 'Let us eat and drink,' and who can gainsay them? It is true that the penalties of sin are more equally apportioned than we think; that the coarsening and hardening of the nature is itself not the least of punishments. But this is true only if Christ be the

Messiah of God. If His revelation and claim be but a dream, then punishment lies not in the coarsening, but in the refining of the soul—in teaching it to miss with a keener pang the spiritual joys no longer to be found. There are those who, come what may, will not seek their consolation in lust. But do they seek knowledge? What though they pursued that to its last retreat? What is all that can be known in comparison with that which must be for ever dark? Do they pursue the solemn ideals of love? The doors of those shrines open out into eternity, which but for Christ is dark from depth to height. Or in a still nobler craving do they seek for perfect purity—cry to be made whiter than snow? Only the Messiah can hear and answer that prayer. So, foiled everywhere in its searching, the soul begins to die. The calls of duty become less imperious. The

tenderness of affection is less intense. The soul moves its wings sometimes in an access of the old passion, but it soon sinks earthward again. The great redeeming and prophetic forces must vanish from the world. The saints—those, it has been finely said, *whom God reverences*, the priests and kings of mankind—will disappear, and with them the rarer graces of character, the flowers with the faint scent of Paradise. These will be followed to those heights and shyest recesses where they linger last; but it will not be for long. In the dull, heavy air of that selfish, sordid, sensual self-interest which has been called, not untruly, the Antichrist of the Pauline Gospel, the moral progress of humanity, bound up as it is with faith, will cease, and the race will recede. The half-accomplished regeneration of society will be arrested and turned to corruption. For

darkness in the end becomes a moral solvent, and where faith dies death reigns.

But we wish to write of this alternative as it presents itself most sharply in some sudden, blinding calamity. Every one has known such; every one of us lives in the dread, if not in the experience, of such an hour. There are souls so lost as to be beyond this fear; but the faithful in Christ Jesus lie open to anguish as He did. Most sorrows carry with them some element of alleviation and hope, something that justifies itself to the reason. Other griefs come as an overwhelming demand on faith, which must be answered straightway. The whole hope of life is covered with a pall, and laid upon the trestles. We must believe or die. Life would be intolerable if the heaven above us were as dark as the earth around us. We believe, and the clouds

open; it is but a faint streak at first, but it broadens.

Yes, we shall be told, but there is no logical validity in all this. You are making the heart's instincts and desires the law of the universe. You are affirming that because you need for your own happiness to believe certain things, therefore these things are true.

For answer let us look at the facts. How does the stricken soul in its great night of grief approach God? Not, we venture to say, in the first instance, as a sufferer, but as a sinner. It rarely charges God; if it does, it speedily remembers that to charge God is foolish. It comes with its sin before Him, and it beholds in the Cross of Christ God Himself as the Chief of Sufferers. That strange look of recognition—deep and eternal—which passes between those who have sounded the secrets of pain—kills doubt.

No; in the heaviest day of daze and death there is for believers a fellowship with Christ in agony. Before any secret of providence is disclosed; when the softest words are harsh; when the heart is sealed and inaccessible to any earthly comfort; when even prayer for the moment is impossible, Christ is in the dark room with the soul which He redeemed, and which He keeps alive. There is not happiness; there is not the hope of happiness; but there is the assurance of the righteousness, the pity, the pardon of the Eternal Love. That the bleeding heart needs this, and is content with this, is a thought and emotion so exalted that it proves itself divine. It is not any poor, earthly, cowardly desire for happiness and ease. We think it is Elizabeth Stuart Phelps who says that the ultimate religious tenderness of man towards God, so high, so pure, so reasonable,

could only have come from God. Whoever said it, it is true. A believing pauper, quite solitary on earth after a life that has stripped her bare, kneeling in peaceful affection before Him Whose outward gifts have been so few, is a witness to the victory of faith over the world. The vestibule may be strait and lampless, but her hand is on the door.

For there comes at last the peace which is better than joy. Patience worketh experience, and experience hope, and hope maketh not ashamed, for the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us. And as Ecclesiasticus says, 'The love of God passeth all things for illumination.'

V

'HE WAS NOT AFFLICTED'

Strong Son of God.

IN MEMORIAM.

'HE WAS NOT AFFLICTED.'

'HE said, Surely they are My people, children that will not deal falsely; so He was their Saviour. In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the angel of His presence saved them; in His love and in His pity He redeemed them, and He bare them and carried them all the days of old.' It is possible to read 'He was not afflicted,' and though the rendering is rejected by the best critics, it expresses a great truth. There was One other than the rest; One Who was strong among the weak, erect among the fallen, believing among the faithless, clean among the defiled, and living among the dead; One Who, being whole, gave His health for the sick.

We never read that Jesus Himself was sick. According to the old word, the Messias of God was found among the lepers bandaging their wounds. But with the subtle congruity which is at once the seal of truth and the miracle of inspiration, the Gospels never represent Him as prostrated by any disease of mortality. We are never told that His brow burned and His mind wandered in the delirium of fever. He did not know in His own experience the waste and weariness, the draining away of hope and strength, that come to the sick. He did not lie tossing in helpless pain, waiting for the day. The poison did not taint His blood. He moved among sick folk, and laid His hands on them, and healed them, but He was not afflicted.

Nor did he live to know the weakness of old age. His swift days ran straight to

their goal. The river of His life never compassed the wide and dreary reaches before the sea. While yet in mid-course

> 'That which drew from out the boundless deep
> Turned again home.'

Or, in Father Ryder's words—

> 'Though Thy pangs were hard indeed,
> And all Thy body wrench'd and wrung,
> Some pains Thou hadst not, dying young.
> I know that 'neath the olive's shade
> A secular weight on Thee was laid;
> The bitterness of ages past
> Into Thy cup of life was cast,
> And all time's miseries yet to come
> Wrought in Thy mystic martyrdom;
> Yet scarce was middle age begun
> When Thou hadst all Thy labours done,
> The Eternal years in mortal span
> Wax'd from the child into the man:
> It was not meet that God should wane
> From man into the child again;
> And so the feet that Mary kiss'd
> The withering touch of age have miss'd,
> And not a golden hair was grey
> Upon Thy crucifixion day.
> High on the crest of manhood's hill
> Thou didst Thy ministry fulfil.'

Nor was He ever infected by the world's cynicism. For Him the colours of existence did not fade, as they do for many who lose their illusions and end by neither hoping much nor caring much nor believing much. The dust of the world was never in His throat. The babble, the discontent, the shortcoming, the debasement, the bitterness, never woke an echo in His soul. It was not that He did not see; He saw all that men of the world see; but He saw further—saw that without which human life is but painted shreds of flying dreams. And thus it was that His clear eyes humbled them as He passed on, His work never ceasing, His quiet never broken. Before Him they knew themselves to be subjects of the Prince of the world, and that He was none.

For—and this was His central triumph—He was sinless. He had not lost the

battle ere He knew its mighty issues. For the rest of us innocence is often lost ignorantly; the first air we breathe is tainted, and the battles have all to be fought in the shadow of a dire defeat. But He was of *quick* understanding in the fear of the Lord. Or, as Professor G. A. Smith has translated the prophecy, 'He drew breath in the fear of the Lord.' We, however purely intentioned, are compassed about by an atmosphere of sin. 'We cannot help breathing what now inflames our passions, now chills our warmest feelings, and makes our throats incapable of honest testimony or glorious praise. As oxygen to a dying fire, so the worldliness we breathe is to the sin within us. We cannot help it; it is the atmosphere into which we are born. But from this Christ alone of men was free He was His own atmosphere, *drawing breath in the fear of*

the Lord. Of Him alone it is recorded that though living in the world He was never infected by the world's sin. The blast of no man's cruelty ever kindled unholy wrath within His breast; nor did men's unbelief carry to His soul its deadly chill. Not even when He was led of the devil into the atmosphere of temptation did His heart throb with one rebellious ambition. Christ *drew breath in the fear of the Lord.*

One modern writer, not wholly unbelieving, has remarked that Christ was haunted day and night not by the thought of sorrow and want, but by the thought of sin. It would be much truer to say that His burden was neither the thought of sorrow nor that of sin, but the thought of unbelief. Sin was terrible to Him. When it came close, as in His temptation, He

flinched from it as from a hot iron. Space with its million stars was nothing to the gulf between sin and righteousness. But He was never overpowered by the tremendous spectacle of evil—never daunted by its strength. He had overcome the Wicked One, and for all who believed in Him the same victory was possible. Not the bondage, but the refusal to walk forth free, wrung from Him those cries and bursts of pain which are more awful than His sternest words.

Once more, He was unconquered by death. His death was the Lord's death and the Lord's doing. He foresaw and meant it from the first. When it came He went to meet it, not as a Stoic with iron will refusing to wince, nor as one superior in all but power, and yet giving power its due. Death met Him at the

trysting-place which He, and not death, had chosen. It had no power at all over His soul, and none over His body save what He gave it. None could tear away the garment of His mortality; but when the hour struck, He folded up His life like a vesture, and it was changed. The Holy Thing that slept in Joseph's grave held the myriad forces of corruption at bay till the soul returned. Then He awoke, and lifted up His pierced Hands and blessed the sleepers at his side—whose sleep was to be so long—whose waking was so sure.

'He was not afflicted,' and yet it was He Who carried our sicknesses; Who was touched with the feeling of our infirmities; Who knew to the uttermost life's burdens and secrets; Who tasted death for every man; Who trod the winepress alone, and

bowed for the sins of His people under the weight of the Divine wrath.

Herein is love, not that we loved God but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the Propitiation for our sins.

VI

THE LOST LAND OF BEULAH

Es ist ein grosser Unterschied zwischen der Klarheit der Heiligen (im Vaterlande) und der höchsten Klarheit, zu welcher wir in diesem Leben gelangen können; denn der Schatten Gottes erleuchtet unsre inwendige Wüste; aber auf den hohen Bergen des gelobten Landes est kein Schatten, und doch ist es nur eine Sonne und eine Klarheit, die unsre Wüste oder Finsternis und auch die hohen Berge erleuchtet.

JAN VAN RUYSBROECK.

Concerning death the first question is whether it be a thing to be contemned.

Ans.—Comparison being made betwixt death and these things which after death are prepared for the faithful, death may and ought in some sort to be contemned by all believers.

AMESIUS.

THE LOST LAND OF BEULAH.

"Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel till the Son of Man be come."

WILL our hearts to the last leap up when we behold a rainbow in the sky? Or will life survive its zest? Will its opportunities cease ere we are willing to forego them? Are the days inevitable of which we shall say we have no pleasure in them? Must the time between the abatement of natural force and the end be spent in wishing that the end were come?

John Bunyan did not trace the pilgrim's progress in that manner. He knew that towards the close of life the soul is finally and formidably assailed. It is the last opportunity for the Enemy of the Pilgrims.

'When,' thinks the Enemy, 'will these fools be so desirous to sit down as when they are weary, and when so like to be weary as when near their Journey's end?' So the Enchanted Ground where tempters and temptresses ply their arts on the outworn spirit is placed near the end of the race. But once beyond it, the soul is in another air, warm and clear, with the mist past, Doubting Castle no more in sight, and Giant Despair out of reach. There the sun shines continually; every day the flowers appear on the earth, and angels walk the ground. There the pilgrims are licensed to make bold with the King's orchards and vineyards. There they can hardly sleep for waking at the bells and trumpets of the New Jerusalem. Yet they are more refreshed than if they had slept never so soundly. When they sleep they talk much, for they have drunk the wine

of the new Kingdom, which goeth down sweetly, causing the lips of them that are asleep to speak.

So, as Bunyan remarks with exquisite grace, 'as they walked in this land they had more rejoicing than in parts more remote from the Kingdom to which they were bound.' Such is the normal course of grace. Yet in these days of boundless energy and striving many even among Christian souls fear that their life may close after unfruitful years. They do not believe with Bunyan that the last days may be the time of richest experience and ministry. They do not accept with serene and joyful acquiescence the fact that their force is failing. To such comes the word of our Lord to His disciples, 'Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel till the Son of Man be come.'

That is, there will be work for you at the

last. Not the old work. Many of us, before we grow old, know that our power for labour is surely lessening. It is well to give heed to the warnings of weakening strength and the lonelier way. The misery in which Christian lives often close is largely due to the attempt to continue work for which the toiler has ceased to be fit. Leave that, and there is other work. The cities of Israel are not gone over. This one and that you can no more influence, but there are others that will welcome you and believe you. The orator may have to content himself with the pen. The preacher may have to step from prominence to obscurity. But whoever has passed over the enchanted ground to Beulah is a mighty influence. His force is not to be measured by the old tests, but it radiates from him continually. It keeps silently conquering

new fields, and is unspent at death. 'Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel till the Son of Man be come.'

Nor even if active work is stayed by suffering, does this arrest influence. In the growing life of grace suffering is beyond labour. 'Knowest thou what our Lord says to His dear Peter, "When thou wast young thou girdedst thyself; . . . but when thou shalt be old, another shall gird thee." The young scholars in the love of God gird themselves; they choose their penance, resignation, devotion; they do their own will in doing the will of God. But the old masters in that love suffer themselves to be bound and girded by another; they stretch forth their hands, allowing themselves to be governed willingly against their will.' In a sense our work is complete—complete in Him Who is the Righteousness of His people

before God, and Who said, 'It is finished.' But in another sense His work and ours is unaccomplished; the Gospel is the story of what Jesus *began* to do and to teach.

Neither can life take from us the power of joy. It is true that our peace is drawn from fountains older than the world, but the ministry of nature is for believers, and believers only, unexhausted to the last. 'Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel till the Son of Man be come.' In his singularly powerful poem, 'The Ant's Nest,' Mr. H. D. Traill sets forth the misery of the world, and all his answer to his problem is this:—

'So to the voice that answered not
Still cried I, "Answer Thou!
The dumb enigma of our lot
Lies heaviest on us now."
But now! . . . The brooding East was riven,
The morning wind took wing,
Above in the fast brightening heaven
The lark began to sing;

Sweet through the lattice breathed the blue,
The mower clinked his scythe;
Rang out from 'mid the gathered kine
The milkmaid's laughter blithe.
Ah, blessèd sounds of wiser life,
Contented with its day,
How ye rebuke the inward strife
That wears the soul away!'

This is a mood that comes and passes with the morning. A firm faith in immortality utters itself more nobly, 'I said when I awoke, "After some more sleepings and wakings I shall lie on this mattress sick; then dead; and through my gay entry they will carry these bones. Where shall I be then?" I lifted my head and beheld the spotless orange light of the morning beaming up from the dark hills into the wide universe.' But here is a true song of Beulah:

'Yet earth was very good in days of old,
And earth is lovely still;
Still for the sacred flock she spreads the fold,
For Sion rears the hill.

Mother she is and cradle of our race,
A depth where treasures lie,
The broad foundations of a holy place,
Man's step to scale the sky.

She spreads the harvest field which Angels reap,
And lo! the crop is white!
She spreads God's Acre where the happy sleep,
All night that is not night.

Earth may not pass till heaven shall pass away,
Nor heaven may be renew'd
Except with earth; and once more in that day
Earth shall be very good.'

So in the old faithful road we may travel to the sky; the power of service and joy remaining; visiting the cities of Israel to minister and be ministered unto; coming in the end to Beulah, and there waiting the good hour to go over the Water and be let in at the Golden Gates.

VII

FALLING ASLEEP BY THE COUNSEL OF GOD

For my part I think man is more favoured than the angels, and made capable of higher heroism, greater virtue, and a more excellent spirit than they, because we have such a mystery of grief and terror around us; whereas they, being in a certainty of God's light, seeing His goodness and His purposes more perfectly than we, cannot be so brave as often poor weak man and weaker woman has the opportunity to be, and sometimes makes use of it. God gave the whole world to man, and if he is left alone with it, it will make a clod of him at last; but to remedy this God gives man a grave, and it redeems all while it seems to destroy all and makes an immortal spirit of him in the end.

HAWTHORNE.

FALLING ASLEEP BY THE COUNSEL OF GOD.

By the counsel of God we shall awake in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, and be raised incorruptible in His likeness. By the same counsel the dead fell asleep, and when our time comes we shall sleep also. Without discussing whether the marginal rendering in Acts xiii. 36, 'David, after he had served his own generation, fell asleep by the counsel of God,' is correct, we may take it as expressing a truth of Scripture—one which becomes more precious every year as a torch to lighten the gathering glooms of death.

It is easy to believe this when life is victorious and complete, when the service of

the generation has been faithfully accomplished, and nothing tarries but the perfect rest.

'Mountain and valley lie behind,
The slough is cross'd, the wicket pass'd;
Doubt and despair, sorrow and sin,
Giant and fiend conquer'd at last.
Neglect is changed to honour now,
The heavy cross may be laid down;
The white head wins and wears at last
The prophet's, not the martyr's, crown.

Greatheart and Faithful gone before,
Brave Christiana, Mercy sweet,
Are shining ones who stand and wait
The weary wanderer to greet.
Patience and Love his handmaids are,
And, till by the clear call released,
Christian may rest in that bright room
Whose windows open to the East.'

Nor difficult to hear the counsel of God when a defeated but not unfaithful life,

'After many griefs, and salt, sad days,
And forced companionship with men that creep,
And loathing sufferance of things that soil,'

finds an end of the broken way and passes

joyfully through the world's great gate. But the utmost trial of faith in the Divine Righteousness and the Divine Love must be encountered ere we can hear it spoken of all accepted souls.

Consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus. He died an early and cruel death. Yet we are permitted to hear the counsel of God in His dying. For in the conflict of Gethsemane the victor said, in the supreme exercise of His will, *Not My will, but Thine be done*, and on the Cross He drank in gentleness the cup that did not pass from Him. As Newman says in his incomparable sermon, on that Cross He did not say and unsay, do and undo. He subjected Himself to the whole endurance. His soul was stretched out as His body was, and not till the cup was drained did He say, 'It is finished.' Then, still obedient to the

Will of the Father, even when He spoke His own, He bowed his head in command as well as in resignation, 'Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit.' His martyrs have died by the counsel of God when all the powers of hell were loosed on them. Steadfast eyes have tracked them through fire and flame, a Divine Presence has been by their side, a secret whisper has been heard in their souls, and so they have passed beyond the thousand agonies.

What are we to say of those who faithfully gathered the gold and cedar, and were never suffered to begin building the temple? What of those who in the height of faculty have been encountered by a sudden and violent check as by a wall of adamant? The heirs of God, the joint-heirs with Jesus Christ, are not finally thwarted. The surging and eddying powers that in this life might

have had a broken and troublous course, find full, free outlet in the other. 'His slaves shall serve Him as priests.' Death is not frustration, but fulfilment. We know all this; but it is more to behold and worship the will of God. It is hard to conceive a world more needy than our own; but in the counsel of God there is rest. Dr. Robert Vaughan, in his memoir of his son, gives the medical report that told the worst, and says, with grave and manly tenderness, 'The day when this medical report first reached me was the darkest day in my history. This stroke came not on the branch only, it seemed to descend to the centre of the root. I felt that the severance threatened left my very nature poor. It was not so much an outward object as myself, my better self, which seemed to be passing away from me. Hopes cherished through half a life fell like a faded flower.

Untruthfulness seemed to have come into the memories of the past. The visions of the future vanished. The void produced a heart-sickness such as men do not put into words. But the son did not charge God foolishly, and I trust the father did not. We had both been made to know in Whom we had believed.' As Gratry wrote of Perreyve, 'Ce jour là vous étiez porté par les anges. Je crois à ces gracieux détails de providence: *In manibus portabunt te, ne forte offendas ad lapidem pedem tuum.* Les anges vous ont porté pendant toute votre vie et jusque dans le sein de Dieu.' 'On that day you were borne by angels. I believe in these gracious details of Providence: "In their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone." The angels bore you up during all your life, and bore you on to the breast of God.'

Such deaths may be reasoned about, but it is best to accept them at first simply as a great demand on faith. This is emphatically true of those deaths in writing of which one hesitates and retreats—the deaths of little children by what we call accident. So terrible is the strain on faith that one of the saints of our time has said that she could not believe God responsible for the death of her little girl; such a death must have happened against His will. But to say so is to offend against the generation of God's children; to enter the dark forest where the track is instantly lost. Far wiser was Jess in *A Window in Thrums*: 'Ay, but that day he was coffined, for all the minister prayed, I found it hard to say, "Thou God seest me." It's the text I like best noo, though, and when Hendry and Leeby is at the kirk I turn't up often, often in the Bible. I read

frae the beginnin' o' the chapter, but when I come to "Thou God seest me" I stop. Na, it's no 'at there's ony rebellion to the Lord in my heart noo, for I ken He was lookin' doon when the cart gaed ower Joey, an' He wanted to tak' my laddie to Himsel'. But juist when I come to "Thou God seest me," I let the Book lie in my lap, for *aince a body's sure o' that, they're sure o' all.*' In a New England town not long ago a little newsboy was run over by a horse car and fatally hurt. He was but six years old, earning his own bread. In his last agonies he cried piteously for his mother—not that she might comfort him, but that he might give her his earnings. 'I've saved 'em, mother, I've saved 'em all. Here they are.' When the little clenched hand fell rigid, it was found to hold ten cents. Was God there in the life and death of that child?

Did His hand lead him and His right hand hold him? and was it His counsel thus to take the dutiful babe into His more immediate keeping? Faith, and faith only, can answer 'Yes.' 'It must be God's doing,' Charles Kingsley said of his own sharpest grief; 'it is so painful and so strange.'

VIII

THE AGONY IN THE GARDEN

Is the tree's pride stung with the top's abasement?
Is the white rose more of a saint than the red?
What thinks the star as it sees through the casement
A young girl lying beautiful, dead?

BARRY PAIN.

THE AGONY IN THE GARDEN.

NOT the agony in the wilderness. Agony and garden: the two words are in sharp and jarring contrast. The distress of Gethsemane seems even more awful when we remember that Gethsemane was a garden. In the pleasant orchard, under the restful shade of interlaced branches, on the sweet green grass the Son of God encountered the keenest pangs of His trial. There passed the forlorn hours when He bore the whole weight of our calamity. There He was sorrowful and sore troubled even unto death; there His sweat became, as it were, great drops of blood falling on the ground. There He prayed with strong crying that the hour and the cup might pass away from Him, till into the soul

denied human sympathy other comfort was poured, and He was heard for His godly fear.

The impassiveness, the irresponsiveness of Nature in the presence of crushing sorrows, is one of the most familiar experiences of life. The whole face of things is changed for us, and we demand that the darkness within should be met by darkness without. Yet Nature is lightsome and griefless.

> 'The birds make insolent music
> Where the sunshine riots outside,
> And the winds are merry and wanton
> With the summer's pomp and pride.
> But into this desolate mansion,
> Where Love has closed the door,
> Nor sunshine nor summer can enter,
> Since she can come in no more.'

Sometimes we dully acquiesce:

> 'As long as skies are blue and fields are green,
> Evening must usher night, night urge the morrow,
> Month follow month with woe, and year wake year to sorrow.'

Othertimes something in us protests and cries for sympathy. Emerson, one of Nature's

chief prophets, complains in his lament over his little son:

> 'Night came and Nature had not thee,
> I said, "We are mates in misery."
> *The morrow dawn'd with needless glow.*'

Mr. Hardy, in one of the noblest and most imaginative passages to be found in English prose, says that smiling champaigns of flower and fruit harmonise only with an existence of better reputation as to its issues than this. 'Fair prospects wed happily with fair times; but what if times be not fair?' He thinks that men have oftener suffered from the mockery of a place too smiling for their reason than from the oppression of surroundings over-sadly tinged, and foresees a day when 'the chastened sublimity of a moor, a sea, or a mountain, will be all of nature that is absolutely in keeping with the moods of the more thinking of mankind.'

The Bible prophesies the time when man and Nature alike shall be tuned to the key of rapture. As an eminent critic has said, one main characteristic of Hebrew poetry is its 'imperious subjectivity.' It takes small account of the contrast between the mind of man and the expression of natural things. The eye refuses to see what the heart cannot receive. The desert blossoms with the Hebrew singer's joy, 'and the orchards and gardens of Carmel wither in his despair. The fairest things are spurned with impatient hate, or blighted with bitter curses, if their beauty stands in contrast to his woe.'

'Ye mountains of Gilboa,
No dew, no rain be upon you,
Ye fields rich in oblations!
For there the shield of the mighty lies rusting,
The shield of Saul—not anointed with oil.'

Were we dealing simply with a problem of æsthetic criticism, it would have to be said

that such intensity of subjective feeling might often fail to justify itself to the Western mind. Each instance in secular poetry has to be judged by itself. In religious poetry the case is different. There the poet sings of the ultimate harmony of Nature and man in a confederacy of joy. And there his religious intuition must be held to justify the form as well as the contents of his song. For to the Hebrew seer all things must at last consent to the Divine purpose of redemption. That is the central, shaping, victorious force which will not be spent till its work is fully done. This faith it is which gives its form and colour to Hebrew poetry, which turns it from aspiration to prediction. This faith it is which maintains itself against the powers of evil, and the show of things, knowing that what is impossible with man is possible with God. This passionate trust in

the ultimate blessedness and harmony of creation is nowhere more grandly uttered than in Isaiah. There we read that the wild beasts even will be bent to the redeeming, reconciling Will; that when righteousness and faithfulness rule the world, 'the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them.' Inanimate nature, too, shall see the glory of the Lord; the glowing sand shall become a pool, and the thirsty ground springs; and the redeemed of the Lord shall walk singing through a singing land.

When we come to the New Testament, St. Paul lifts the veil from a triple accord of sorrow. He hears the unutterable groanings of the Holy Spirit; the groaning of believers; and the groaning of the world.

The Apostle anticipated much of what is newest in modern science. He looked beneath the surface; he caught the undertone of creation, and it was and had been a sigh. As with the soul, so with Nature, sorrow had been deeper than joy. 'We know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain with us until now.' With us—even with us who have the first-fruits of the Spirit. For St. Paul Nature had been led captive in man's dark captivity. Her splendour was a strange and ruined glory. As one says, 'Nature is a mother in God, but a fallen mother—a cross lies upon her back, and she is bowed down under it; another runs right through her heart, and she sighs, moans, and travails in pain. Jesus-like, she is affixed to her cross, and suffering and death are her heritage.' But she lifts her head and espies from far the manifestation of the sons of God. When

God brings His redeemed with Jesus, Nature will put on like them her destined array of beauty. Like man, Nature will be redeemed and restored in Christ; like man, she is the object of persevering and irrevocable love.

How that love will reach its goal we can but dimly understand. Through the chill of death, through the fervent heat of judgment, through the stealing on of love's soft fire, which subdues all things unto itself, the reconciliation will be perfected. When these heavy earth-dreams are past, God and Man and Nature will be found in a unity of glorious peace. The creation, made sweetly wise through every part, will speak the prayer of man and the answer of God.

'In that day, saith Jehovah, I will answer,
I will answer the heavens,
And they shall answer the earth,
And the earth shall answer the corn and the wine and the oil,
And they shall answer Jezreel.'

IX

THE DYING OF THE LORD JESUS

O teach those wounds to bleed in me: me so to read
This book of loves thus writ,
In lines of death my life may copy it
With loyal care.
Oh, let me here claim share.

CRASHAW.

THE DYING OF THE LORD JESUS.

ST. PAUL aspired after conformity to Christ's death. Dying is just a part of living—sometimes a long part, often a hard part. With Christ, life and death were all of one piece—simple and calm. Even on the Cross He took up things in order, and gently.

(1) His first word was about His enemies: '*Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.*'

Forgiveness—the ruling thought of His mission, men's need of it, and how they could have it—is His first thought in death.

We may safely say that He was not used to physical pain. Most people suffer much before their sharpest pang, and are led up to it. He was never—so far as we can tell—

sick. Conceive the agony when the nails were driven in.

Pain shakes the sense of justice. Not in Him. He judged from the Cross as scrupulously as He will from His white Throne. He apportioned degrees of guilt.

The men who nailed Him had little knowledge of Him. They were nearly as much instruments, we might say, as the nails they hammered. But even the smallest knowledge of Christ brings responsibility. How much more a full knowledge? With what measure shall those be judged who claim a true and just acquaintance with Him?

(2) His next word was to a new friend—but just before an enemy—*To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise!* What did the robber expect? *Lord, remember me when Thou comest in Thy kingdom.* That they two would die; that the long trance would come; that the wrong would be righted at last; and

that when it was, Jesus would be Lord. And then, 'Have a thought of me.' The answer was, 'When I go to My kingdom thou shalt keep My company, and that before the set of sun.'

Now we pray, Remember me in Thy kingdom—from Thy Throne.

But there is more. A poet of this generation asked that the robber's words might be put on his gravestone. And nothing could utter more fitly the prayer of the poor dishonoured clay, 'still united to Christ.' Long after the flowers have ceased to grow on my grave, when the lines are blurred on the stone, when the last that loved me is gone, when I am no more in memory among men, when stone and dust are mingled, and great tides of oblivion have rolled over all, remember me—have a thought of me. And the thought will mean resurrection.

(3) Now He comes to His first earthly friend: *Woman, behold thy son: son, behold thy mother.*

His mother—but He did not say mother. A poet has made a dying son speak thus to his father:—

> 'Here aneth I ca' you father,
> Auld names we'll no tyne or spare;
> *A' my sonship I maun gather,*
> For the Son is King up there.'

But Christ had a wider motherhood, sisterhood, brotherhood. The ties of the spirit are mightier than the ties of blood. 'Whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is My brother, and sister, and mother.'

(4) At last His thought settles on Himself. He cries out of the depths, *My God, My God! why hast Thou forsaken Me?* Note that when His spirit was all in tumult He was conscious of no fault. He looked above as He had before looked around, and knew

there was none to charge Him. Even the purest, sweetest, gentlest natures (*e.g.* Catherine of Siena) have been shaken in the end by the consciousness of sin—apparent to none on earth but themselves. *He was made sin for us, Who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.*

(5) The tide begins to be assuaged. He has leisure to mark the pain of the body. *I thirst.* The voice of the Fountain! It was He who had made the land alive with the ripple of sweet water: the Creator of cool wells, of running brooks, of broad rivers. He thirsted!

Christ's suffering was of the spirit chiefly. The bodily suffering was secondary. For when the worst darkness had rolled from the face of His soul He rapidly grows calm. He says—

(6) *It is finished.* The thing we can

never say. 'My book, my book,' Buckle murmured restlessly in the fatal fever. But—

> 'Fret not that thy day is gone,
> And thy work is still undone;
> 'Twas not thine, it seems, at all:
> Near to thee it chanced to fall,
> Close enough to stir thy brain,
> And to vex thy heart in vain.'

Trusting Him, we may link on our poor frustrated lives to His finished work, and be 'complete in Him.'

It is finished. The sacrifice has been offered; the door has been opened which no man and no devil can shut; and now He sets Himself free.

(7) *Into Thy hands I commend My spirit.* God opens the gate of death—often not until the spirit has beaten long at it. How often have we heard it from meek sufferers: 'I hope to get home to-night.' Christ opens the door Himself—judges His work—sends

away His spirit—a holy spirit into holy hands.

'He is never so completely victorious over the world as when He bows His head to the world, and takes the worst that it can do.'

Such is His death. Resting in it as an atonement, we become conformed to its spirit —which is the spirit of patience, love, and trust. 'The greatest of these is love.' 'Trust in God is the last of all things, and the whole of all things.'

X

THE HAPPY ENDING

And so he fell asleep without a struggle, and sleeps in the Lord—in Jesus, Who had shown him much favour, and had honoured him to bring back His captives from Babylon, and to go before them, in separating themselves from strangers to the law of their God. For this great and glorious task he was fitted in the most eminent manner, so as not to be discouraged by any tribulation whatever; and although he found it always true that afflictions and persecutions awaited him, yet he found the consolation in Christ, the comfort arising from the truth, always sufficient to support him in every trial.

MEMOIRS OF MR. JOHN GLAS.

THE HAPPY ENDING.

'THAT I might finish my course with joy,' was the aspiration of St. Paul's life, and the desire was fulfilled. We do not forget that the final words are omitted in the best manuscripts; but their strain may be caught elsewhere. The Apostle sought to finish the course appointed him, and to finish it in joy; and there, as in other things, he is a pattern for them that believe.

Yet when we think of it, not many of the faithful end their lives in joy. The stoutest hearts—those who have carried themselves in the sternest struggles with a high and equable heroism—come at last to quail at a cold look. We are accustomed

to see even great Christians end in gloom, and that not through recognised transgression or deliberate failure to obey. Many spend the last years of life in banning every sign of progress, and in sighing vainly for the past. Others deplore their waning power over the minds of others. 'I shall die, and people will say, "We are glad to get rid of this schoolmaster."' The desire to die in harness is Christian, but the desire to die in the same harness is neither Christian nor reasonable. The orator who bewails himself over the loss of popularity is not a heroic figure. The craving after a life which shall rise from climax to climax of popular applause—whose close shall be marked by an imposing funeral and lengthy obituaries—is often confused with a zeal for God. And mortification over the inevitable weakness of old age often cloaks

itself as a sorrow over the fruitless fight of the Gospel.

But St. Paul had a happy ending. He did not leave a flourishing and growing Church. He did not see the doctrine of the Cross transforming society. Rather he died among fallen and falling things. Heresy, persecution, the world, were doing their worst to extinguish the flickering torches he had lighted here and there in the vast darkness. His own work had been mysteriously cut short. He did not die on a high table-land of sunshine and success: rather in the lowest valley of humiliation. For he was alone in prison, waiting the headsman's sword. He was poor, friendless, almost deserted in the hour of his extremity by those who owed him all. Yet he finished his course with joy.

What was the secret of this strange

triumph? What was that unearthly splendour which lighted the grey rocks and the dim gorges of the valley of the shadow of death? Let us hear the glorious Apostle.

I have fought a good fight. Even Chrysostom is perplexed at such an utterance from those truthful and humble lips. Doubtless St. Paul 'meant to raise up his dejected son, and to encourage him by his praises to bear firmly what has come to pass, to entertain good hopes, and not to think it a matter grievous to be borne.' Doubtless also, when he said, '*I* am being poured out as a drink-offering,' it was to enforce the admonition, 'Do *thou* fulfil thy ministry.' But that does not account for the Apostle's mood. He is passing here a grave and just judgment on his earthly conflict. To the faithful, Christ vouchsafes glimpses of sunshine in the

grey weather; when all is done there is often the lustre of a great light. St. Paul forgot the weary march, and the cold bivouac, and the frequent repulse, as his days of ceaseless, earnest, serious zeal gathered themselves together to be poured out as a drink-offering before God. Life had come to its holy Saturday—the eve of the resurrection—and the glory of the Lord shone round about him. He—even he—saw the sacred colours luminous through age and death.

I have finished my course. It had been long; so it was appointed him. For others the call comes soon; they are honourably released before the hottest of the day. Though they die early, the saying of Charles XII. may be repeated, 'Was it not enough of life when he had conquered kingdoms?' St. Paul, though he hardly

saw it, won many a kingdom from the barren realm of darkness, and life had been good. He was not weary. His gladness was not exultation that the rough day was worn out. Life had not been to him a May-game, or a puzzle, or an illusion, or a defeat. So he grew calmer and calmer as he faced the terror and peacefully took his farewell look on sun and sky.

I have kept the faith. Not as a treasure outside of himself, not as a jewel in a casket. He kept the faith as myrrh in his bosom, as a joy within his heart. Thus the things of time had no power to chill his soul or damp his hope. He was never at the mercy of the winds; his courage did not rise or fall with the thermometer. Below all traces of age and weariness up sprang the inexhaustible fountains of life.

So he looked on to the unwithering crown which the Lord the righteous Judge was to place upon his head—and with his grand characteristic humility he goes on to say, on many heads never to wear crowns of service and martyrdom like his own—heads of those who can only say that they have loved and do love His appearing. The fight was fought. The course was run. The ministry which he had received of the Lord Jesus, his lifelong burden and his life-long joy, was fulfilled at last. Now the solitude was divine with love. The frail thread was snapping, but fear was cast out. So he sought 'his home, the Saviour's homely Throne.' 'The last thoughts of a heart that loves Thee are like the last deepest, ruddiest rays of the setting sun. Thou hast willed, O my God, that life should be beautiful even to the end. Make me

to grow and keep my green, and climb like the plant that lifts its head to Thee for the last time before it drops its seed and dies.'

XI

THE CHURCH IN THE CHURCHYARD

Marvel of marvels, if I myself shall behold
With mine own eyes my King in His city of gold;
Where the least and last of saints in spotless white is stoled,
Where the dimmest head beyond a moon is aureoled.
O saints, my beloved, now mouldering to mould in the mould,
Shall I see you lift your heads, see your cerements unrolled?
See with those very eyes: who now in darkness and cold
Tremble for the midnight cry, the rapture, the tale untold—
The Bridegroom cometh, cometh His Bride to enfold!

Cold it is, my beloved, since your funeral bell was tolled;
Cold it is, O my King; how cold alone on the wold!

CHRISTINA G. ROSSETTI.

Obdormivit in Christo.—Physiologists hold that it is during sleep chiefly that we grow: what may we not hope from such a sleep on such a bosom?

S. T. COLERIDGE.

THE CHURCH IN THE CHURCHYARD.

WHERE two or three are gathered together in His Name under the sod, there is Christ in the midst of them—the Resurrection and the Life. For the bodies as well as the souls of the redeemed sleep in Him unto everlasting waking.

'Corporeity,' it has been profoundly said, 'is the end of God's ways with man.' The great Easter message is the immortality not of the soul only, but of the whole ransomed being. Professor De Morgan, who left testimony that he believed in his heart that God raised Christ from the dead, spoke of the body as if it had as little abiding connection with the spirit as the clothes a man

wears and casts aside. 'Let the machine,' he said, 'in which I have done duty be carried to those whose business is to mend it while in action, that they may by examination of it become better qualified to mend other machines. If you want some of my remains to perform a ceremony over, take any of my old clothes. They only differ in this: the former remains were worked up by a much more skilful workman than the latter; and therefore the former are worth preserving for examination, while the latter may be buried if you please.' The Bible takes no such view. The body as it is, and as we have made it, is indeed worn, disabling, dark. But it is something more than a clog or hindrance, for the Word became flesh, and ascended in visible bodily form. His corporeal humanity is now localised. As He went He will return to perfect redemption

by joining for ever man's body and soul. The body in which we shall come will be in the likeness of the body of His glory, but the identity of the new with the old will be kept. How, we cannot tell, any more than we can tell how through all mortal changes the body continues the same. It is said of Sir William Rowan Hamilton, the greatest mathematical genius of the century, that, attaching high importance to the doctrine of the Resurrection of the Body, he believed it to be a necessary but sufficient condition that the risen body should contain identically some material particle or particles of the old body, however entering into new chemical or organic combinations. It may be well to avoid such definitions, even such a word as 'material.' What we know is that the old companion of the soul will join it again after the long parting—both joyous, free, and

glorified, but still the same—the same after all the differences. So may we gaze in peace on the image of the departed, and say:

> 'On high
> A record lives of thine identity!
> Thou shalt not lose one charm of lip or eye;
> The hues and liquid lights shall wait for thee,
> And the fair tissues wheresoe'er they be.
> So shall that beauty its old rights maintain,
> And thy sweet spirit own these eyes again.'

If this is so, how intense is the significance of these mortal years! Our earth-life is not, as we often count it, a mere moment in the numberless cycles. Eternity is more than time; but time is the seed-plot of eternity. Here between us and the grave are the germs sown of all that is to be. Or, to change the figure, time writes the table of contents; eternity writes the book. The relationships and affections which Christ has hallowed are immortal, and whatever we may come to know of the multitude that no man can

number, we shall not miss our own. Those who believe that life is a plan of God will understand how what in it was most sacred and deep is of necessity everlasting. The fellowship is transfigured and exalted, but it is not broken. Life would otherwise be no more than a poor and shallow mockery. In the restitution of all things in Christ, lover and friend must come first.

'It has rarely happened,' says a biographer of Cardinal Manning, 'to the lot of any of the sons of men to endure such a deep, unspeakable, and abiding anguish of heart as befel the rector of Lavington on the death of his young, sympathetic, and pure-hearted wife. In that sorrowful summer and autumn of 1837, when even the flowers of Lavington, which he loved so well and loved to the last, lay faded at his feet, widowed of their ancient gladness, he was wont, after his first anguish

of heart had subsided, to sit for hours day by day at the grave of his wife and compose his sermons. When at last he rose up from that silent grave, after what he himself described as "a sort of grapple with what was crushing me," it was with sealed heart—with sealed lips—for thenceforth he never more breathed her name to a living being.' Late in life he was told that her grave was falling into decay, and answered, 'It is best so; let it be. Time effaces all things.' The gravestone; but not the remembrance. A man may almost hide his love and grief; may keep utter silence; may even give over contention with the wasting years, but he turns constantly into the little oratory where the face hangs as he last saw it, and as he hopes to see it again in a softer light. The eternal life, as Gambold, the Moravian mystic, puts it, is the retouching of the temporal.

'So many human souls divine,
Some at one interview display'd,
Some oft and freely mix'd with mine,
In lasting bonds my heart have laid:
O what is friendship! why impress'd
On my weak, wretched, dying breast?

Ere long, when Sovereign Wisdom wills,
My soul an unknown path shall tread,
And strangely leave who strangely fills
This frame, and waft me to the dead:
O what is death! 'tis life's last shore,
Where vanities are vain no more,
Where all pursuits their goal obtain,
And life is all retouch'd again.'

These things will come to pass because Christ is with the sleepers, watching by their tombs. Once He lay by their side, and continued under the power of death for a time. When its brief authority was over He rose from the rocky floor, 'and blessed with outstretched hands the host around.' He did not tread the silent realm so lightly but that some whose ear was wakened to hear as the learned caught His footfall, and stirred

a moment. 'Many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of their graves after His resurrection and appeared unto many.' They returned to their hopeful rest, and wait the day made sure when He will call and they will answer, when He will have respect unto the work of His own hands. Thus we put our dead in Christ's keeping, and lay on the pale bosom the unwithering rose, 'Looking for that blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ,' and leave them

> 'Through the winters long and deep,
> Till the last trump overbreathe them,
> And they smile out of their sleep.'

XII

'BUT THEN—FACE TO FACE'

Let Christ's own look through
The darkness suddenly increased
To the grey secret lingering in the East.

COVENTRY PATMOR

'BUT THEN—FACE TO FACE.'

ST. Paul was not content with winning Christ, nor even with knowing Him. It was not enough to be found in Him, to be clothed with His righteousness, to be made comformable to His death. Something to be longed for, to be suffered for, lay beyond—the crown of all striving. *If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.* This was the promise to which, instantly serving God day and night, St. Paul hoped to come.

There shall be a resurrection of the dead —of all the dead. Did St. Paul fear lest he should fail to start at the sound of the last trumpet—he who shall surely be among the

foremost to rise to meet the Master? Nay; but he longed for the resurrection because it was the consummation; the hour when all veils should fall, when he should see Christ face to face in the direct beatific vision, beyond which there is nothing.

The first part of the Christian doctrine of resurrection is that the Christ Who was incarnate in Palestine is incarnate in heaven. Paul knew nothing of a sleeping Christ. He affirmed Christ to be alive, and by that he meant not that His spirit was shrined above, but that He had risen from the dead. Christ had not left His body to see corruption, while His soul returned to the infinite ocean of the Divine peace. Body and soul made an indissoluble and living unity. Paul had seen His face, and longed to behold it again and for ever. It was the face that had been marred on the cross.

'This defaced, a lifeless clod
Hath all creation's love sufficed,
Hath satisfied the love of God,
This face, the face of Jesus Christ.'

It was the face that shone on Stephen when the High Priest stood up to bless the soul of His first martyr, rising over the storm-winds. It was the face which, full of love and pity and reproof, looked on Paul himself as he lay blind on the dazzling road. It was the face he beheld when the scales fell from his eyes and he knew God's will, and saw the Just One, and heard a voice from His mouth. He had seen it all the years after in glances by the day, in dreams by night—sometimes in visions of the third heaven. But at best these disclosures were broken and fitful. He had often but the bare support of whispers and intimations, and he longed for more. If we scan with sympathy the Apostle's life, we shall mark an inexhaustible patience, and

with it certain impatiences, one, and the chief—an impatience of veils. Here they hide the divinest loveliness God has given us to know. And other things hinder full and joyous vision. The stress of toil and temptation, the moods of feeling that come and go even in the strongest, obscure the face of Christ. But these alternations of light and cloud, of gloom and gladness, were to end, and his spirit was to rest in the still ecstasy of beatitude. Not distracted any more by life's storms, unperplexed by its glooms, it would turn to the Lord, and the veil would be taken away.

Everything shrank and paled before the glory of that vision. But how was it to be received? What face was it that would look on Christ and on which Christ would look? The face of Paul, yet not that face. Paul's face, for the Christian doctrine of resurrection

implies the identity in essence of the first body and the second. St. Paul himself teaches a resurrection, not a new creation. We are allowed, and indeed urged, to prepare for vast, and, at present, inconceivable changes. But the body that returns to dust is the seed of the new body in which is perpetuated the unbroken life. St. Paul, who taught this, taught also the dignity of the human body as the temple of the Holy Ghost. But the resurrection was his dearest faith. For another impatience hardly less marked was his impatience of the body. With all his magnificent indifference to the lesser as to the greater ills of life, he again and again chafes at the hindrance of the flesh. How his body fettered, misrepresented, humbled, and pained the spirit, we constantly see. We may conjecture that with St. Paul the soul was not evident in the face, though the dim eyes and the furrowed

brow bore witness to his sufferings. He was 'such an one as Paul the aged,' old before his time, like the young Christ who had seen Abraham. We need not wonder therefore that he vehemently desired the redemption of the body, the coming of the perfect, the time when the body should be a true mirror and organ of the spirit. That day was sure, for Christ had slept with the dead and quickened them by His touch. He had risen, the first fruits; and they in their turn would rise. Then they would gaze on Him steadfastly and their bliss would be complete. The spirit was soon to escape from its straitened home. The worn image of the earthly was to be shattered, but it would be restored as the image of the heavenly—'so nigh is grandeur to our dust.'

Thus in the consummation the risen Paul would behold face to face the risen Christ.

True, the hour was far off—much further it may be than the Apostle dreamt at first. He was not to remain unto the coming of the Lord; he rests in hope with his spiritual children—the sure hope of the dead. No matter. If he had wished to escape death, the desire was quieted. When he was about to die there came a true and precious and incommunicable token to his soul: 'I know Whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day.' Thus he departed to wait with Christ, where the pain and the doubt of waiting are over. It is we who watch 'the sickening hands of the weary clock.' Patience is there very quiet. One day is with the saints as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

XIII

A PLACE FOR YOU

The will of God is bearing all things that yield to it towards the joy of their Lord.

A. J. SCOTT.

If the Devil with his tyrants hunt you out of the world, you shall still have room enough.

LUTHER

'A PLACE FOR YOU.'

THAT there was no place for them on earth the disciples by this time knew; but even so the words, in spite of their fulness of immortal hope, may have come with a touch of sadness: 'In My Father's house are many mansions: I go to prepare a place for you.' For the universal craving is for a 'place'—some part of the world's room and labour that shall be for us and no other. This begins, and in many cases ends, with the desire for a home. Life wears from the first an aspect so stern and unhopeful, its burdens come so quickly and heavily, that every ambition dies but one. A writer who understands the Irish peasant well speaks of his unwillingness to emigrate. The stony scrap

of potato plot is the only thing between him and the sheer brute forces of nature. It is the stronghold, such as it is, which has defended him and his fathers from the worst storms of circumstance. There are multitudes in the same case. They are just able to hold their ground and no more. If the situation is lost, if the business goes lower down, if the little savings vanish, they are face to face with the beleaguering wilderness.

But even those for whom such thoughts have no terror are for the most part unsatisfied. They have found no 'place,' no 'sphere.' This discontent often comes of restless vanity, or of a vulgar desire for wealth, fame, and station. But in itself it is not ignoble; it is divine. Dr. Ker in one of his letters says: 'We have all a yearning to be understood, to let ourselves out; and surely it is not, as some think, a weakness, but a

strength, for it is that of the *divine* in us which led God to make a world and men in it, and to desire to be known of them.' The bravest and most gifted are not seldom for a time or a lifetime self-enclosed. Their work does not fit them. It might be better done by feebler men; and for lack of what they could do and would rejoice in doing, the world suffers. Carlyle's battle during the lonely years at Craigenputtock, when the greatest genius of his generation was sore put to it for mere life, is an unforgettable instance. He fought circumstance with the best weapon in his armoury, *Entsagen*, defined by Mr. Froude as a resolution fixedly and clearly made to do without the various pleasant things—wealth, promotion, fame, honour, and the other prizes with which the world rewards the services which it appreciates. 'Whoso is a man, may in all seasons

scenes, and circumstances live like a man.' Let us take the world bravely and fight bravely to the end, since nothing else has been appointed us. But we know that even in Carlyle this *Entsagen* degenerated too often into savagery. With others it passes into a fierce and consuming silence, whose meaning is in Byron's wonderful lines—

> 'All that the proud can feel of pain
> . . . .
> Which speaks but in its loneliness,
> And then is jealous lest the sky
> Should have a listener, nor will sigh
> Until its voice is echoless.'

Even Christian hearts are in danger of the 'dead sea in the Holy Land of their nature.' We know what that is: stagnant, tide-forgotten, in the end pestilent. Of these, multitudes long for the larger sphere simply because they have been unfaithful in the small. But there are as many who seem misplaced, who have done all they could,

and whose last hope of change is almost dead.

What can we say of this war with circumstance? Simply this: it is God's education. Suppose a perfect harmony between a man's surroundings and his desires, training would cease. Practically it does cease in imperfect harmonies. Those who envy labourers in larger fields little know what they are doing. The toil is often as severe there as anywhere. But in the rare cases where a man does seem satisfied, successful, and dominant, there is grave peril. No sooner are the early difficulties mastered than the man himself becomes overweening. He ceases to have touch with wholesome outside opinion. He is intoxicated or narcotised by flattery. And his death is commonly clouded by some disastrous error and defeat. Or take the other way. A man narrows his

desires well within the circumference of his circumstances and opportunities. He loses ambition; he is satisfied to do a little work passably and make the very most of the reward. He may thus be a man of cheerful yesterdays and confident to-morrows, but he goes down in the whole volume and quality of his being—down to death. Because God loves us He will not let us rest now, though He means we shall rest soon, and for ever. They must go on—this friction, effort, defeat, these long heavy disappointments of days and months and years, till the soul is shaped.

> 'As blow of sculptor's mallet struck
> Upon the marble's face,
> Such are God's Yea and Nay upon
> The spirit's growing grace;
> So work His making hands with what
> Does and does not take place.'

At the hour Jesus spoke there was no 'place' for the disciples anywhere in earth or heaven. There soon would be, for the Cross

was hard at hand. He was to die before them, and after that all who died in Him would find Guide and Home. 'In My Father's House are many mansions:' *still*, 'I go to prepare a place for *you*.'

In the low, because unscriptural, conceptions of Christianity just now current, there is an underlying assumption that Christianity is not, cannot be, completely remedial. But the Biblical idea is not exhausted even when we say that Christianity is remedial. Christianity, as that subtle theologian, the late Dr. Hugh Martin, has abundantly shown, is more than remedial. We borrow some of Dr. Martin's illustrations.

Revelation, to begin with, is not the removal of a film of blindness. It is not a disclosure of truth once known but forgotten. It is more by very much than the first knowledge of God vouchsafed to the unfallen. It

is a disclosure of the whole wonder of redemption. Nor is the gift of life in Christ the immortality of Eden. It is not life going on endlessly, for now we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding that we might know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life. 'As the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father; so he that eateth Me shall live by Me.' Surely this is the last word that can be said.

Such a life as that must have a new theatre. Paradise restored will not suffice it. The throwing back of the gates of Eden is not enough. 'I go to prepare a place for you.' The keyword of the Epistle to the Hebrews is 'Forerunner.' Passing before the children that God gave Him, the Captain of our Salvation led the way to glory—took

His place as a minister of the sanctuary behind the second veil, which is the holiest of all. Much of the brightness is dark as yet; but we know that now He has prepared a place for us, that where He is there we may be also, and that the true Tabernacle where He serves as Priest is the wonder of the very heavens.

XIV

THE SILENCE OF THE DEAD

There is no speech nor language,
Their voice cannot be heard.

PSALM XIX. 3.

Tacet et loquitur.

THE SILENCE OF THE DEAD.[1]

MR. MYERS'S essays are the work of a mind at once refined and religious, if no longer distinctively Christian. Acutely responsive to the scientific and philosophical influences of the time, he has clung with passion to the truths of natural religion, and thinks he has found a way of saving them. The great majority of Continental savants and disciples of science have, he tells us, ceased to regard a future life as a possibility worth discussing, while even in England and America the belief in survival seems now to rest on a

[1] *Science and a Future Life.* By F. W. H. Myers. (Macmillan and Co.)

temper of mind which in energetic Western races survives for some time the decay of definite dogma. The resurrection of Christ Mr. Myers is disposed to believe in; but though he may have a *moral* right, he concludes that he has hardly a *scientific* right to pin his faith to an event so marvellous and isolated, and dating back to a time and country with standards of historical accuracy so different from our own. He contends that as science advances the limit of human perception has been extended, and interpretations given of forces and entities continually more subtle and remote. If an unseen world exists, it must be a world under laws which regulate all that goes on in that world and all communications (if any there be) which pass between that world and this. The question then is whether terrestrial science can be extended so far as to embrace possible

indications of a life lying beyond which can be verified here.

There is nothing new in this contention. If any one chooses to say there are phenomena which demand a more searching investigation than they have yet received, in order that they may finally be set aside as false or reduced to scientific order, we have no quarrel with him. But Mr. Myers is much more than a believer in ghostly influences. He understands and can render in admirable English the latest modes of philosophical thought. His exposition of Tennyson is specially good, and throughout he is eminently fair, intelligent, and cautious. But it is clear he is not able to cope with the arguments of agnosticism. He sees that the so-called reconciliation of religion and science is often the 'reconciliation of the bird that enters the crocodile's mouth.' Unless there

is scientific proof that the silence of the dead has been broken, the materialistic hypothesis must prevail.

The Christian faith in immortality has, we are convinced, very little concern either with the arguments of metaphysicians or the investigations of scientists. The reasoning of Jesus is sufficient. When Moses called the Lord the God of Abraham, he showed that the dead are raised. God is the God of the living, and His 'friend' could not be left in the dust. The continually altering forms of thought need not disturb us. The question is, How far can the God whom we have seen in Christ go? What will He do, what will He refuse to do for us men and for our salvation? After the Incarnation and the Cross we cannot let His love or our faith in it be tied with any green withes of philosophical speculation. To the work of the Psychical Society

Christians can afford to be coolly and even harshly impartial. Even if Mr. Myers's ghost stories turned out as well as he could wish, the scientists would vex him as much as ever. Spiritual things are spiritually discerned Mr. Myers, to adapt an old comparison, is like one in the valley searching with a telescope whether the wind blows on the mountain top. If he stood there and felt it on his face, he would doubt no more.

But though the temper that asks a sign is not Christian, there are times when, to use Roscoe's eloquent words, faith is weak, and the heart yearns for knowledge; when it seems as if all hopes and fears were bound up in the insupportable longing for one gleam, however brief, of certainty to shine through the darkness. The long silence of the dead aches upon our ears. The cry climbs after the wings of death:

'Could I but win thee for one hour from off that starry shore,
The hunger of my heart were stilled, for Death had told thee more
Than the melancholy world doth know, things deeper than all lore.'

Yet if we consider it, this very silence is not, as Mr. Myers thinks, a difficulty of faith, but its strong confirmation and support.

For if we accepted the so-called communications of the dead, faith in the future would be weakened and disturbed. The normal Christian attitude to the other life is that of Richard Baxter, ''Tis enough that Christ knows all, and I shall be with Him.' It is a commonplace among devotional writers that when the veil is rending, believers look back to the Cross. If they look forward, it is with the solemn but calm anticipation so impressively rendered by the mystic:

'What a strange moment will that be,
My soul, how full of curiosity,
When winged and ready for thy eternal flight,
On the utmost edges of thy tottering clay,
Hovering and wishing longer stay,
Thou shalt advance and have eternity in sight!
When just about to try that unknown sea,
What a strange moment will that be!'

But what nourishment is there for faith in such descriptions as are vouchsafed by spiritualists? That beasts exist in a certain way, that there are houses and flowers and pianos, that little boys are taught by guardian angels and wear purple tunics—what help is there in such details? It is surely far easier, as well as far wiser, to accept the fact that we cannot conceive a mode of existence entirely different in kind from our own. Those cheap and carnal pictures degrade the theme. The other life is too great for this life's language to compass. And if there is one truth dearer than another, it is that our dead

are in the immediate keeping of Christ. Does the Lord Who bought them allow them at times to stray beyond the boundary?

Are their manifestations denied to broken hearts and granted to prurient and avaricious curiosity? And is it credible that the blessed souls are compelled to express themselves by rappings? Even among these shadows we heard them praise and pray. We call to mind how they lived—wise and instructed, free and undismayed, thankful in all things, peaceful in the face of death. They have left sin and darkness behind, and we are asked to believe that they can be summoned to speak their new knowledge by agitating tables! What faith would be confirmed if we found them making noises like rats behind the arras? What comfort would there be in seeing the torch flicker and sputter, since we know that it must burn as

clearly as the lamps before the Throne if it burns at all?

But the dead are silent in the arms of Christ, and He is not silent to us. Because we have the written Word we are not deprived of the immediate manifestations of Christ and His Spirit. Otherwise, as Fletcher of Madeley said, 'we are great losers by that blessed book, and we might reasonably say, Lord! bring us back to the dispensations of Moses. . . . The Jews conversed familiarly with Moses their mediator, with Aaron their high priest, and with Samuel their prophet; but alas! the apostles and inspired men are all dead; and Thou, Jesus our Mediator, Priest, and Prophet, canst not be consulted to any purpose, for Thou manifestest Thyself no more.' Love that rises to the stars, as Dante's did when death had shown the way, knows better. It holds direct communion

with the Lord Himself. And it shrinks from material manifestations, because they dull the sensibilities of faith. That so many a lonely heart is kept in perfect peace, that the hope of the future is still so fresh and sure, is proof that Christ has redeemed His word. He has not left us comfortless; He has come to us.

Whether and in what sense we may have direct communion with the dead is a question answered not to sense but to faith. Let us add that when the secret of the universe is told it will be told worthily—grandly. If we are not suffered to peer through pin-pricks in the veil, it is because it will be rent in twain one day from top to bottom. The manifestation of the sons of God, which the waiting creation lifts its head to see, must be made in the daylight of the universe. When God brings His first begotten into the world

all the angels will minister to His state. Them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, the dead will be raised incorruptible, and the living changed. For that hour of perfect radiance we wait in peaceful trust. *Then* shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of the Father.

XV

IMMORTALITY WITHOUT GOD

Lo, the Elect
Of generous Love, how named soe'er, affect
Nothing but God;
Or mediate or direct
Nothing but God.

COVENTRY PATMORE.

IMMORTALITY WITHOUT GOD.[1]

WILL the various and complex desire of humanity be satisfied by a new heaven and a new earth lighted only by the love of God? Is the fair vision to which the race has strained so long to be replaced by something fairer?

We have come on a book, published some time ago in Dublin, which suggests these questions. As will appear even from our bald summary, it is the work of a thinker, and marked by a certain sombre power, though it has attracted little attention. The hero, Dr. Gervaas Van Varken, the worthy son of a morose and miserly couple living on the

[1] *History of a World of Immortals without a God.* By Antares Skorpios.

Boompjes at Rotterdam, grows up filled with loathing and abhorrence of the whole human race. He meets an ancient Parsee merchant in Bombay, who introduces him to the regular 'transference' agency in Tibet. He is there instructed in the disintegration and reintegration of the ultimate molecules of his body, and finds himself in due time lying on what felt like soft grass on the steep side of a mountain in the planet Hesperos. The inhabitants, he discovered, were in appearance like himself, but the conditions of their life were wholly different. There were men and women, but no children. Each individual lived a periodical life of one hundred years, divided into three stages —stationary, senescent, juvenescent. When the term was reached a change began, and the life proceeded for another hundred years in the reverse direction, and so on inde-

finitely. Such things as disease, decay, or death were unknown. But the people were not immortal, or at least did not seem to be such. When a man fell over a precipice or was struck by a heavy blow he simply disappeared. Evanescence was their name for death. By long study they discovered that evanescence took place whenever the total quantity of suffering undergone by any one exceeded by a certain fixed amount the quantity of the happiness he had enjoyed. The population, therefore, decreased slowly, but there was no addition. The evanescences were not numerous, as every condition of life was easy, and the inhabitants were in the way of changing their trades each century. In seven centuries one inhabitant had been a miner, lamp-maker, organist, confectioner, marine-engineer, barrister-at-law, and maker of sun pictures

Had he continued at one trade he would have become miserable, and in Hesperos misery is dangerous; it makes straight for evanescence.

Yet the Hesperians were not satisfied. They perceived that Some one had made them, and they inferred that He was benevolent. But He would not speak to them. They could not find Him, and for lack of God they were beginning to sink into despondency. As time went on their gloom was checked by the discovery of the stars, which had hitherto not been visible. For long they hoped to have some message; but when the stars, too, were inexorably silent, a great despondency fell over the land, and evanescence became frequent.

This, it was believed, was a final release from misery; and many availed themselves of the privilege by committing suicide. A

fall from a precipice, and all was apparently over. But some adventurous spirits discovered a way to the south continent of the island, and on arriving there they were encountered by a city of the dead. After evanescence, the organised molecules freed by disintegration sought the south pole, and were reintegrated. Thus, while the population in the south continent was constantly increasing and not diminishable, that in the north was constantly diminishing and could not be increased. A submarine ship, devised as a means of communication, restored equilibrium. So the gate of exit was closed, and every one had the certainty of everlasting life.

At first the passage from one continent to another amused the Hesperians and distracted their thoughts. But they came to a sense of the facts. They could not die.

They had to be content with company they could not escape from. Capital punishment was an impossibility—suicide a fruitless ebullition of temper. In process of time the whole hundred millions came to know one another, and this, coupled with the fact that punishment was futile, made them gentle in their behaviour. But they had no hope—no light. The Maker of the Universe did not answer them; they concluded at last that they were forgotten among His myriad worlds. We leave them, with world-weariness and sorrow coming down like a heavy pall.

We are convinced that the desire for immortality as well as the faith of it are now far weaker than they once were. The star that used to shine through the fogs of human evil seems veiled in mists. Even if immortality were attainable, many ask

whether it is to be coveted. Let us make the best of the life that now is, they say. We hardly conceive how completely an exact obedience to natural law and a resolute abstinence from dreams would change the world. Sickness, premature death, poverty, competition, might all be banished. If every one came to his grave in a full age after a full life, death would be a welcome rest. Love would acquiesce and soon wipe her natural tears.

Many Christians have surrendered to this mood, and have given over the earnest contemplation of immortality. They speak about a heaven that may be enjoyed here, and wish to remain in it as long as they can. 'The glories of the dead and their despair' are not now, as they used to be, the theme of discourse and meditation. Perhaps they, too, are touched by the airs

around them, and shrink from the weight of unending years. Archbishop Trench, in his poem, 'The Monk and Bird,' gives fine expression and answer to this misgiving. The monk is troubled by inward questionings—

'For still the doubt came back—Can God provide
In the large heart of man what shall not pall,
Nor through eternal ages' endless tide
On tired spirits fall?

Here but one look toward Heaven will oft repress
The crushing weight of undelightful care;
But what were there beyond if weariness
Should ever enter there?

Yet do not sweetest things here soonest cloy?
Satiety the life of joy would kill
If sweet with bitter, pleasure with annoy,
Were not attempered still.'

Through his musings he heard a bird singing, and was caught up to Paradise. It seemed only an instant, but when he came back to earth he found he had been three generations away from it. Nor did he tarry long behind the departed, for

the weight of years the song had held back came over him amain.

'They placed him in his former cell, and there
Watched him departing—what few words he said
Were of calm peace and gladness, with one care
Mingled—one only dread—

Lest an eternity should not suffice
To take the measure and the breadth and height
Of what is there reserved in Paradise,
Its ever-new delight.'

The limitations of the soul had fallen away, and he knew himself immortal to enjoy the Infinite. Such is the teaching and the experience of Love—never to be content with time. In other words, what fails to bless is the immortality of Hesperos—an immortality without God, or full of a God unloved and misunderstood. The former should be regarded with indifference, the latter with terror. To long for the immortal, we must hear God speak in Christ. Then

we know that God is infinite, God is Love, God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

The love of the human, wherever it is high and worthy, calls for immortality.

> 'When all base thoughts, like frighted harpies flown,
> In her own beauty leave the soul alone,
> When Love—not rosy flush'd as he began—
> But Love still Love—the prison'd God in man,
> Shows his face glorious, shakes his banner free,
> Cries like a captain for Eternity.'

But such love seeks its goal in God, and it is to Him that the people of God move from rest to rest, till He broods over them in the great eternal peace, 'when the Son also is subjected to Him that did subject all things unto Him, that God may be all in all.'

XVI

IMMORTAL LOVE

The self-same cherub-faces which emboss
The Veil, lean inward to the Mercy-seat.

E. B. BROWNING.

Thus I believe, thus I affirm, thus I am certain it is, that from this life I shall pass to another better, there, where that lady lives, of whom my soul was enamoured.

DANTE.

[*Recorded by Robert Browning, in his wife's Testament, after her death.*]

IMMORTAL LOVE.

WHEN we try to formulate the relation between this life and the life to come, the problems that rise are so perplexing that one is tempted to doubt whether on that side there is any gate for the mind. How far will the eternal life reproduce the conditions of this? Will the dead be to us for ever what they once were? Or rather, will they make such account of us as they did? The question is not so much whether we shall recognise them. If individuality and memory remain, there must come knowledge of some kind. But when they rate us at our worth, when all things are seen and known even as they truly are, will they not turn from us to nearer kindred? The fear op-

presses us most when they have newly departed, and we vainly try to conceive the new surroundings of their existence.

'You had journey'd times enough—we learn'd to miss you—
There was fond and eager talk of winds and ways:
You had waved your hand at parting, bade us kiss you—
But this was for your journey of all days!

How we counted through the hours when you had vanish'd!
How we said, *She is here, She is there!*
Now the heart on which we lean'd must be banish'd
From the Here to the Everywhere.'

For answer there emerge certain great facts. The first is that of continuity. The next life is not a new life, but a prolongation of the old. There is change—on a vast scale, doubtless, but no change which destroys the connection. The soul that dies in grace continues in the same exercises of humility, adoration, love, and peace. It

begins where it left off. It has an abiding memory of the past, an abiding sympathy with the former self and its surroundings. In the normal human life, however prolonged, the relations of spiritual love cannot perish, and they must endure in the life to come.

Next, the life beyond the grave is the perfect life. The departed are with Christ. Here they had a true though broken sense of His presence, and it was their sanctification. Through obstruction and darkness and temptation His influence reached their spirits, and conformed them to the image of His own. We know the wonders it wrought through all hindrance, even as when for the believing robber by His side it filled the hours of silent agony with peace and high thoughts. But when the soul goes forth from its earthly vesture, it yields itself in every part to His grace. It lies in the

Beatific Vision—conscious of God's presence and God's love. It is where sin cannot be, nor fear, nor doubt. Fully obedient to the precept, 'Rest in the Lord,' it knows nothing but the ceaseless, overpowering sunshine in which evil perishes, while good eternally grows.

Now, in the other world, where love meets love, we too hope to be freed from sin. Then we shall not need to ask how pure spirits can love us in our baseness. True love is never content with imperfection. Yet here imperfection is always present. The rarest qualities have their shadows. Where there is enthusiasm there is usually a failure in scrupulous justice. The deepest tenderness hardly goes with frank truthfulness. A richly generous nature is seldom sufficiently grateful. There is something endearing in human frailty, but the noblest love is ever impatient of the least shortcoming. It does

not acquiesce in evil though it bears with it gently. It knows that it can only reach its crown when there is nothing to check it on either side; when the love and the loved alike are in perfect harmony with the will of God. It endures in spite of evil, but it never consents to the companionship of evil and good; in the darkest hour it whispers of their eternal divorce.

Then if the future life is continuous with this, and if with the deliverance from sin the hindrances to love disappear, may we hope again to take up the old love-life without break or want? If time were of a piece with eternity, and no more than the dim beginning of an endless existence, its relationships would be of little significance, and might soon be superseded and forgotten. But eternity grows out of time. If eternity is the 'much fruit,' it springs nevertheless from time, the

corn that falls into the ground and dies. The earthly life is a plan of God, and the affections by which it is blessed and hallowed are immortal. What touched our souls to eternal issues is itself eternal. In the vast realm of spirits none can be to us what these are that came nearest us in time. The very thought of such a possibility is profanation. The faded sunsets, the dead roses, we forget. New lights and new flowers repeat for us the past. But the light of souls cannot be borrowed or repeated. The deep heart closes over its grief, and though the grave be green and smooth, it holds the dead.

'In other fields than ours
The rose that bless'd our sight
Is blooming—and to happy eyes
Yields ever fresh delight;
None other such may come
To gladden us again,
That fragrance from another flower
Would kill the heart with pain.

Therefore we thank Thee, Lord,
That Thou dost not renew
Perfume and light that with our lost
Have vanish'd from our view;
We thank Thee for the love
That keeps them close apart,
None like them—after them—to mar
The image in our heart.

That makes them not short links
Of one revolving chain,
Fragments that perish to revive
Its kindred parts again;
But grants us love full-orb'd,
Worthy our soul's desire,
Single, eternal, hid in store
With all its life entire,

And now through that great Lord
Whose light is ne'er withdrawn,
Shows us in lingering sunset hues
The colours of the dawn;
And through His Tree of Life,
With never-fading bloom,
Wafts well-known fragrance from the skies
Into our narrow room.

Till He Who walk'd the waves
Who calms the troubled soul,
Shall prove the power that in Him lies
To renovate the whole;

To depths of seas and graves
Shall send His voice far down,
And ruin'd hopes, and buried dead
Rise perfect—and our own.'

There is nothing Christian then in the view that we ought to have no special love for any human being, but love all in God, and God in all. The Divine Heart, in Whose affections none were crowded or jostled, 'loved Mary and her sister and Lazarus.' Yet it is by virtue of the spiritual bond that love endures. When our thoughts pass beyond the veil, we realise that the true union is harmony of feeling; that we have our meeting in the common love of Christ. We are nearest our dead when our thoughts take the unchangeable direction of theirs. Then, in a true communion, we come to the perfect in their perfection, to an intercourse which is all Christian, to where our loved ones, in Fletcher of Madeley's words, 'blossom and

shine in the primeval excellence allotted to them by their gracious Creator.' Between our love for them and our love for Christ there is no disharmony. If the Saviour said in dying, 'And now come I to Thee;' if His strong Apostle desired 'to depart and to be with Christ, which is very far better;' it is no sin in weaker souls if they anticipate the welcome of the gentle and familiar faces whose radiance will shine on them always. For it is the golden threads of love which gleam through the mingled texture of our human life that sign in it the name of God.

XVII

THE END OF ENDS

The Christian prayer runs, 'Deliver us from evil:' The Buddhist, 'Deliver us from existence.'

AMIEL.

Socii Dei sumus.

THE END OF ENDS.

DEEP in the heart of man is the desire for an end—an end which shall be at once the vindication and the term of history. It is answered by the Providence of God, which at steadily recurring epochs makes it plain that the world is the scene of the divine government. The curtain is, as it were, rung down, and men pause to think of all that has been, and discern the purpose and movement of eternal righteousness. At the fall of Jerusalem, at the conversion of the Northern nations, at the re-birth of civilisation in the sixteenth century, there was an end. Individual life craves for an end—in youth, in love, in happiness, as

well as in age and darkness, and it does not seek in vain; for at furthest we are on the outer edge of the crowd that is ever pressing through the doors of death to a new and unimaginable experience.

But the teachings of Christ and His Apostles are full of a large and generous answer to this craving in their constant promise of our Lord's Return. It may be said with perfect truth that Jesus died for His prophecy of the Second Advent. When He stood, bearing up against a tempest of insult and passion, He said in words for which the Sanhedrim instantly condemned Him, 'Hereafter ye shall see the Son of Man sitting on the Right Hand of Power and coming in the clouds of Heaven.' This hope deeply coloured the thought and practice of His Apostles. It was with them a main theme of exhortation

and promise. In the most evil days of unbelief it has been the peculiar treasure of His Church. We know that He will make His word good; that He will appear the second time, without sin, unto salvation. Then will come an end.

But once at least St. Paul saw beyond even that. In the great passage (1 Cor. xv.) where he expounds the essence of the revelation which he had straight from the lips of the Truth indeed, the furthest horizon lifts for a moment and moves away. And he sees the day when the last enemy is destroyed, when Death is put under the feet of Christ—when the Son delivers the Kingdom to the Father. Εἶτα τὸ τέλος. Then cometh the end—which is the end of ends.

The words, mysterious as they appear, throw a strong and tender light on life,

death, and the future. To receive the chrism of absolving love is to die with Christ. Those whom He looses from their sins in His own Blood, He makes to God a Kingdom of Priests. Their hopes are built on the merits of His death alone; but as His priests they desire with desire to drink of His cup and be baptized with His baptism. They pray that they may know the fellowship of His sufferings. They fill up that which is behind of His afflictions. The signature of His Cross lies upon lives which He has redeemed from selfishness and filled with the joy and power of sacrificial love. The Head and the members together fill up the offering of Christ.

But when death comes, especially when it comes to the young and those whose period of service and conscious redemption

has been brief, great and sore questionings rise. Is this the end of love and sacrifice? Perhaps the Church at last begins to believe that death is not the end of love. But the popular conception of the period between death and resurrection is that it passes for the departed like a pleasant brief night—that it is a time of clear darkness, of happy quiescence, of listening to, rather than joining in, the new song of the Eternal Life. So far this is true. Over the bridge of death they pass into uninvaded rest. No pain comes to them, nor shadow of earthly care. That peace has reached them which it is all our striving to attain, and we shall find it and them when our call comes.

But we ask still—Have they finished for ever with the joy of sacrifice? Has such power to labour and endure all ended

with the brief space of earthly life? If it has, are any joys sufficient to make up for this arrest and maiming? Is not glory itself a weight—exceeding, eternal, but intolerable, if it stifles and crushes the old generous Christ-like aspiration and ardour?

The answer surely is that they are still priests in the Kingdom of the Mediator. This intermediate system of vicarious life, whose symbol is the Cross, is still the theatre of their activities. Jesus is on the throne, and so long as He sits there He is busy with His work of reconciliation and conquest. They must share it as we do—share it with higher powers, in larger light, delivered as far as He is delivered from everything in the nature of suffering, *but no further*. Christ is still using them. In ways inconceivable to us they yearn, labour, and fight for the completion of His triumph.

Herein is the true comfort for those who sorrow over lives that here could do little redeeming work. 'Christ went to intercede with the Father; we do not know, we may not boldly speculate; yet it may be that saints departed intercede, unknown to us, for the victory of the truth upon earth . . . . they are taken away for some purpose, surely; their gifts are not lost to us; their soaring minds, the fire of their contemplations, the sanctity of their desires, the vigour of their faith, the sweetness and gentleness of their affections, were not given without an object.' So Newman wrote in one of his sermons, with evident recollection of his friend Hurrell Froude, then close upon his early death. To Froude himself he said, 'How *many* posts there are in His Kingdom, how *many* offices, Who says to one, Do this, and he doeth it, etc. It

is quite impossible that some way or other you are not destined to be the instrument of God's purposes. Though I saw the earth cleave, and you fall in, or Heaven open and a chariot appear, I should say just the same. God has ten thousand posts of service. You might be of use in the central elemental fire; you might be of use in the depths of the sea.'

So much for the life of redeemed souls before the Advent. They are about the old tasks. Their life is free and warm and fruitful. They are working out the stores with which the Master endowed them. Still they wait for a coming good; their life is incomplete. In the heart, it has been finely said, is the border-land between body and soul, and they desire to be clothed upon with the flesh that rests in hope. The hour will at last arrive. God

will bring Jesus from Paradise, and those who sleep in Him. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, the dead will be raised incorruptible, and the living will be changed. All that made the union of soul and body irksome and constraining will be done away. We shall find our lost, lovely and triumphant in more than the vanished light of old mornings. And so we shall be for ever with the Lord.

And then?

Is the Kingdom of the Mediator surrendered at the Advent? We do not so read the inspired utterance. *Then* cometh the end. When? God knows. First comes the resurrection of Jesus, then the Second Advent; then the end of the mediatorial kingdom. But the third is not coincident with the second, nor is it said to follow it immediately. Rather, reinforced by His

gathered company of priests, Christ renews the war—which is the war of the Lamb —the war of mercy as of judgment. His power and love are exerted to the utmost. What visions of love and service open out in this thought! With the old comrades, in the fulness of joy and affection, under the direct command of Christ, His slaves serve Him as priests. At last He breaks through the final rank of evil angels. He puts down all rule and authority and power. Then Death stands up solitary among the slain enemies and meets Christ in the last battle. He, too, is abolished, and all things are subjected to the Son. The end of the quarrel is the end of the mediatorial kingdom. It is the end of ends. Vicarious life ceases. The Son Himself is subjected unto Him that put all things under Him. God is all in all. Our life is no more of

the river, but of the shining, tideless sea. All beside ceases, but there is no end to the endlessness of love. And so we shall be for ever in the Lord.

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